

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0206

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EGEN, CA
SUBJECT: GOQ SCORES LIMITED SUCCESS AT ECONOMIC SUMMIT

1. SUMMARY: NO CONSENSUS DEVELOPED DURING GOQ'S ECONOMIC SUMMIT MAY 25-27 BUT LEVESQUE APPEARS TO HAVE SCORED LIMITED PUBLIC RELATIONS VICTORY. IN POST-SUMMIT PRESS CONFERENCE, PREMIER CLAIMED SEVERAL AREAS OF AGREEMENT EMERGED FROM WORKING SESSIONS IN FIELDS OF LABOR RELATIONS AND REVIVAL OF QUEBEC'S SAGGING ECONOMY. DESPITE SURFACE HARMONY, TENSION BETWEEN LABOR AND MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES WAS HIGH THROUGHOUT MEETING. YVON CHARBONNEAU AND NORBERT RODRIGUE OF CEQ AND CNTU WERE PARTICULARLY INTRANSIGENT TOWARD GOQ AND BUSINESS. QFL LEADER LOUIS LABERGE, ON OTHER HAND, SEEMS TO HAVE EMERGED AS BIGGEST GAINER FROM CONFERENCE. HIS REFUSAL JOIN LABOR RADICALS SOLIDIFIED HIS ALREADY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH LEVESQUE AND GAINED HIM APPRECIATION FROM MANY QUARTERS. PREMIER, WITH LABERGE'S HELP, WAS ABLE ISOLATE RADICALS IN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, SAVE THE REPUTATION OF HIS GOVERNMENT (AS SUMMIT CAME WITHIN AN ACE OF BEING SERIOUS FLOP), AND FURTHER ENHANCE HIS OWN PUBLIC IMAGE AS A MODERATE WHO SUCCESSFULLY OPPOSED EXTREMISTS. IT IS DOUBTFUL LEVESQUE WILL CONSIDER HOLDING ANOTHER SUCH MEETING UNLESS TANGIBLE RESULTS ARE
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REASONABLY ASSURED BEFOREHAND. END SUMMARY.

2. WHILE NO CONSENSUS DEVELOPED DURING ECONOMIC SUMMIT, GOQ SUCCEEDED IN AVOIDING DISASTER AND EVEN SEEMS TO HAVE LEFT PUBLIC WITH IMPRESSION OF LIMITED SUCCESS. LEADERS FROM SUCH DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AS PAUL DESMARAIS OF POWER CORPORATION, LOUIS LABERGE OF QUEBEC

FEDERATION OF LABOR, AND ALFRED ROULEAU, PRESIDENT OF "MOUVEMENT CAISSES POPULAIRE DESJARDINS" ALL EXPRESSED POLITE ENDORSEMENT FOR NEED FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DESCRIBED SUMMIT AS GOOD BEGINNING. MANY PARTICIPANTS EXPRESSED HOPE THAT A SECOND SUCH MEETING WOULD BE HELD NEXT YEAR.

3. ONLY SPOKESMEN FOR MORE RADICAL LABOR UNION CENTRALS, CEQ AND CNTU, DISSENTED. MAINTAINING INTRANSIGENT ATTITUDE SHOWN BEFORE AND THROUGHOUT THREE DAY MEETING, YVON CHARBONNEAU AND NORBERT RODRIGUE WERE RETICENT ABOUT A SECOND SUMMIT MEETING. THEY DEMANDED THAT AFTERMATH OF FIRST MEETING LEAD TO SOME CONCRETE RESULTS BEFORE SPEAKING OF A SECOND. OTHER PARTICIPANTS WARNED THAT SECOND MEETING MUST BE BETTER PREPARED THAN FIRST BUT TEMPERED THEIR PUBLIC CRITICISM WITH COMMENT THAT PROCESS COULD DO SOME "GOOD."

4. IN A POST-SUMMIT PRESS CONFERENCE, PREMIER LEVESQUE CLAIMED SEVERAL AREAS OF AGREEMENT EMERGED FROM WORKING SESSIONS IN FIELDS OF LABOR RELATIONS AND REVIVAL OF QUEBEC'S SAGGING ECONOMY. WHILE PARTICIPANTS DID REACH A CONSENSUS ON "MOTHERHOOD ISSUES" SUCH AS INDUSTRIAL HEALTH AND SAFETY, THE ROLE OF THE "CONSEIL CONSULTATIF DU TRAVAIL DE LA MAIN D'OEUVRE" AND THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN LABOR MARKET, NONE OF THE GROUPS MADE CONCESSIONS ON IMPORTANT QUESTIONS SUCH AS CLOSED SHOP, ANTI-SCAB LAWS AND LABOR UNION VOTING PROCEDURES

LEVESQUE PROMISED THAT GOQ WOULD INTRODUCE LEGISLATION CONCERNING THESE THREE SUBJECTS IN FALL. IN ATTEMPT REASSURE BUSINESS SKEPTICS, LEVESQUE IN OPENING REMARKS DELCARED THAT GOQ HAD NO INTENTION OF DOING AWAY WITH MARKET ECONOMY AND WOULD ONLY INTERVENE

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DIRECTLY IN ECONOMY IN PARTICULARLY WEAK AREAS OR WHERE OVERRIDING INTERESTS OF QUEBEC PEOPLE DEMANDED SUCH INTERVENTION.

5. DESPITE SURFACE HARMONY, TENSION BETWEEN LABOR AND MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES, WITH GOVERNMENT UNCOMFORTABLY IN MIDDLE, WAS HIGH THROUGHOUT CONFERENCE. AT ONE POINT, A SHOUTING MATCH BROKE OUT BETWEEN YVON CHARBONNEAU AND BRIAN MULRONEY, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF IRON ORE COMPANY OF CANADA AND PROMINENT PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE LEADER. CHARBONNEAU CALLED TWO PROMINENT QUEBEC JEWISH BUSINESSMEN ECONOMIC TERRORISTS. MULRONEY THEN DENOUNCED CHARBONNEAU AS A RACIST AND ANTI-SEMITES. SOME PRESS REPORTS ALLEGE THAT LEVESQUE WENT OVER TO MULRONEY AFTERWARDS TO CONGRATULATE HIM FOR HIS REMARKS.

6. COMMENT: IN THE END, SMMIT WAS, IN LEVESQUE'S OWN WORDS, A MODERATE SUCCESS, BUT CAME WITHIN ACE OF BEING SERIOUS FLOP. (SEE REFTEL). FOR FUTURE, GOQ IS LIKELY BE MORE CAREFUL IN AVOIDING STATEMENTS AND ILL-CONCEIVED PUBLIC RELATIONS EXTRAVAGANZAS

WHICH COULD AROUSE UNREALIZEABLE EXPECTATIONS OR COLLAPSE IN
PETTY SQUABBLING BETWEEN UNCONTROLABLE ADVERSARIES. WHILE THE
PQ LEADERS SURVIVED THIS CONFERENCE WITHOUT SERIOUS DAMAGE TO
THE GOVERNMENT'S REPUTATION AS FOR COMPETENCE, LEVESQUE IS CERTAINLY
AWARE OF HOW CLOSE HE CAME TO DISASTER AND WILL NOT HOLD ANOTHER CONF
ERENCE
UNLESS TANGIBLE RESULTS ARE REASONABLY ASSURED BEFORE HAND.

7. ASIDE FROM SAVING REPUTATION OF HIS GOVERNMENT, LEVESQUE'S
MOST IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENT WAS IN ISOLATING RADICAL TRADE
UNIONISTS
AND IN ENHANCING HIS OWN PUBLIC IMAGE AS MODERATE WHO SUCCESSFULLY
OPPOSED EXTREMISTS. THIS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE
AID OF LOUIS LABERGE OF THE QFL WHO SEEMS TO HAVE EMERGED AS
BIGGEST GAINER FROM CONFERENCE. LABERGE'S REFUSAL JOIN RADICAL
COLLEAGUES IN CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT AND IN DEMANDS REVOL-
UTIONIZE QUEBEC'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORDER FURTHER SOLIDIFIED
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HIS ALREADY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH LEVESQUE WHILE GAINING HIM
APPRECIATION OF HIS OWN RANK AND FILE, AS WELL AS, MAJORITY OF
GENERAL PUBLIC.
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